

The COUNTRY JOURNAL: OR, THE CRAFTSMAN.

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Remarks on the Daily Courant of the 3d and the 11th Instant.

REAT Pains have been taken, for some Time past, particularly in the *Courant*, to shew the evil Tendency of writing freely upon foreign Affairs, and that our constitutional Liberty of the Press does not exempt such Writings from the Penalties of the Law. As this Distinction between foreign and domestic Affairs hath been but lately started, and at a very particular Crisis, I had Reason to apprehend that it was calculated to serve a particular Occasion. I took Notice of This in my Paper of Oct. 30. and considered the Force of the Argument, on which the Distinction was founded, with Impartiality and, I think, with Candour; notwithstanding which the Writer, who appears in that Paper, hath thought fit to oblige me with three more long Essays on the same Subject, or to the same Tendency, with a great deal of dull Acrimony and low Prevarication; but, at present, I shall only make some cursory Observations on the two first.

He denies that the former *Courants*, upon which I made my Animadversions, were written with any such View, or Design, as I imputed to Him; but He must excuse me, if I am a little hard of Belief in this Point; for the very Account, which He gives of Himself in the Papers now before me, as well as the Language, in which He writes, hath enabled me to make a pretty shrewd Guess from what Quarter They come; and I am not altogether so ignorant of the World, or so intirely unacquainted with a certain Scheme now in Agitation, as to believe that this Species of Writing hath been particularly mark'd out to the Re resentment of the civil Power, through a long Course of Papers for several Weeks together, and at such a particular Juncture, without some particular Reason, though He may think proper to disown it.

If He was really sincere in this Declaration, why does He pursue the Hint, (which, He says, I have given Him) with so much Zeal, in two or three subsequent Papers, and manifestly endeavour to prejudice and aggravate the Guilt of a certain Person, now under Prosecution, by making the following particular Application of his Doctrine; which He calls, either knavishly or absurdly, a general Observation; viz. that should the Authors, or Publishers of that particular Paper (meaning the Paper under Prosecution) be then found guilty in the Points, on which they stand legally accused, it would be no Alleviation of their Crime, in the Eye of the Publick, that they are perhaps the very same Persons, who, through a Series of Years, have treated the whole Thread of our publick Transactions in a Way so apparently detrimental to the Nation. It is not a first; it is not a sole Offence.

Now, with all due Submission to this worthy Advocate for Prosecutions and Severity, I must insist upon it that if the Person, to whom He alludes, should happen to be found guilty of the Crime, with which He is charged, it will be an Alleviation of it in the Eye of the Law, as well as in the Eye of the Publick, that it is his first and his sole Offence; for the Law supposes every Man to be innocent, till He is found to be otherwise, and the Person, under Consideration, hath not yet incurred the Censure of the Law for any Offence; nay, He hath had the Happiness to be openly acquitted, after a long Trial, of a Charge of the same Nature, by the Justice of the Courts, and the Verdict of his Country; to which He must again submit Himself. — But I shall say no more upon this Subject, and should not have said so much, if it had not been extorted from me by the base and scandalous Attempt of this Writer.

As to the late Dispute about *Cato's Letters*, which He endeavours to revive, I shall let it rest as I left it before; because it is of but little Importance to the Merits of the Cause, as I then observed; and I am unwilling to draw any Gentleman into such personal Altercations any farther than it was necessary to my own Defence, when I was provoked to it by a particular Attack on his Account. Besides, I met with the same candid Usage in this particular as I have in many others. The ministerial Writers first pointed out *Cato's Letters* to me as a just Pattern of political Writing, and when I had proved that I had already trod in the same Steps, they reproach'd me with Breach of Friendship, Ingratitude, and I know not what, for vindicating my own Conduct by that Pattern, which they had recommended. I shall there-

fore quote his own Works for the future, like other Writings, when I think them for my Purpose, or of any Use to the Publick, without entering into any farther Discussions about the Design, or Conduct of the Writer.

Before We come to the Merits of the Question, concerning foreign Affairs, another Remark is necessary to disentangle it from the Perplexities and Confusion, which this Writer hath purposely thrown about it, in order to conceal his own wretched Sophistries and Prevarications.

In the first Place, I must observe that the Writer of the *Courant* hath intirely misrepresented the State of my Argument, in Defence of the Liberty of the Press; for he charges me with extending it to an unbounded Right of printing what We please upon all Matters of Government and Religion, without any Regard either to Statute, or common Law; whereas I never made use of any such Terms, nor ever intended any such Thing; but, on the contrary, have frequently explained my Meaning to be, an unreserved, discretionary Power for every Man to publish his Thoughts upon any Subject, and in any Manner, WHICH IS NOT FORBIDDEN BY THE LAWS OF THE LAND. I never contended, or designed to contend, for any Liberty of writing beyond these Bounds; and whenever, or wherever I may have pleaded for Liberty in general, I desire and ought to be understood in that Sense only, whether the Limitation before-mentioned be particularly express'd or not; for when an Author hath once defin'd and explain'd his Meaning, I do not think it necessary for Him to trouble the Reader with repeating it every Time He hath Occasion to write upon the same Subject. — Though this egregious Misrepresentation of the State of my Argument is not contained in either of the Papers, which are now under Consideration, but in a subsequent one, I thought proper to take Notice of it in this Place, in Order to give the Reader a true State of the Point in Debate, and to obviate the like Falsifications for the future.

The Question between us, fairly staid and stript of all the Fallacies, with which He hath surrounded it, is This: whether the Liberty of the Press does not extend to the Examination of foreign Affairs, as well as of domestic Affairs, within the same Bounds and under the same Restraints.

The Writer of the *Courant* asserted the Negative, in his first Essay upon this Subject; and I undertook to maintain the Affirmative, in my Answer to it. Let us therefore examine what He hath since advanc'd, by way of Argument, to support his new-fangled Distinction; in which He seems to have the Misfortune of standing single and without any Second, even amongst the Writers of the same Party; for his learned Brother *Walsingham* hath lately vouchsafed to assert the Liberty of Writing in the most general, unlimited Manner; and I do not remember that Mr. *Osborne* hath any where given his Sanction to this Distinction. And here I must observe another peculiar Circumstance of our Case, which is that We are often obliged to dispute a Point with one of these Writers, which all the rest have given up; but to proceed.

I frankly acknowledged, in my Remarks on this Writer, that the Liberty of the Press is certainly attended with some Inconveniences, whether it is exercised on foreign, or domestic Affairs; but I observed that these Inconveniences naturally attend Liberty of all Kinds, and that all Arguments drawn from the Disadvantages, which arise from Liberty in general, prove too much, if They prove any Thing, and can serve only to recommend arbitrary Power.

His Answer to This is another direct Falsification of my Argument; for He says that instead of enquiring whether the Practice of examining foreign Transactions is right and necessary in England, according to our establish'd Constitution, I put a general Question of the Preference between absolute Monarchy and absolute Democracy.

I call This a direct Falsification; for I was so far from putting a general Question between absolute Monarchy and absolute Democracy, that the Question I put was evidently between absolute Monarchy and free Governments of all Kinds; particularly our own; which I specify'd in such express Terms, that it was impossible for Him to misunderstand my Meaning without Design; for having shewn that the natural and necessary Consequences of his Argument, against the Liberty of examining foreign Affairs, equally affected all Liberty in general, I

proceeded thus. It proves that the particular Restraints and Limitations, on which our Constitution depends, are only so many mischievous Clogs on the Wheels of our Government, and consequently ought to be taken away. These farewell! to the Liberty of Parliament, as well as to the Liberty of Writing; for one may be easily proved to be as detrimental to our Affairs, upon this best Principle of Reasoning, as the other.

One of the Reasons, which He urged in His first Essay, against making Points of foreign Policy the Subject of popular Debate, was the Incapacity of the common People to understand them. In Answer to This, I gave my Opinion that the common People were as capable of understanding these Points as domestick Affairs, when They are explained to them. The Gentleman's Reply to this Observation is of a Piece with his other Reasoning, and exactly agreeable to the Principles, on which it is founded; That is, the Ignorance of the People, and the Necessity of implicit Obedience to the Conduct of Ministers. The Craftsman, says He, is always appealing to, and trying the Merits of Aliuillers, Negotiations and Treaties by a Rule wholly chimerical, the imaginary Opinion of a vague and indeterminate Publick, which can be no ways ascertained, or collected. But will not this Objection hold equally strong against political Writings of all Kinds, address'd to the People, whether Matters of external, or interna, Policy are the Subjects of them? — I asked Him, in my former Paper, whether He did not think that a Cobler, or a Porter, is as able to comprehend the bad Consequences of too close a Conjunction with France, or the useless Expence of maintaining foreign Troops in Times of Peace, as the present State of the national Debt, the Nature of our Funds, or any other Point of domestick Administration? — To the latter Part of this Question He makes no distinct Reply; but expatiates, in his usual Strais, on the extreme Difficulty of forming any right Judgment of our late Measures, in the critical Junctures, in which our Ministers came to their several Determinations how far they should wink at, or resent the several Attacks made on our Interests? Have We not stood, says He, for four or five Years, on the very Brink of an hazardous, general War, into which the least rash, or unweighted Conduct, in most of those Points, had in all Probability plunged us? — Why truly yes; but let me ask this Gentleman, in my Turn, by whom and by what Kind of Conduct, We were brought into such a delusive Situation, as He terms it in another Place; for This is a Question, which very nearly affects the Interest of the Nation, as well as the Merits of his Patron, and I cannot help entertaining a very strong Suspicion that This is one of the principal Motives to all the late Clamour and extraordinary Methods of Reseatment against any Enquiries of this Nature.

But the Gentleman complains that I have evaded the Force of his Argument, and misrepresented the Point in Debate, concerning the evil Tendency and mischievous Effects of such Writings on our Affairs abroad, by converting all his Reasonings into this general and indistinct Objection; that such Debates give our Enemies an Opportunity of mingling in our Councils, and furnish them with Advantages over us in the Cabinet; for, says He, the very Point of the Argument, on which the chief Part of the Accusation turns, in my Case, is This; that such Debates give our Enemies Hopes of succeeding at one Time, if They have not at another; and so, by keeping Them steady in their Councils, necessarily tempt Them to draw out every Negotiation, or every War, into a much greater Length than would otherwise be. — Now, for my Part, I still think that the whole Weight of this Objection is contained in my general Proposition, that such Debates furnish our Enemies with Advantages over us in the Cabinets; and I must leave the World to judge what Reason He hath to complain of Disingenuity, or Prevarication, in this Case; especially, when I made no Scruple of owning, at the same Time, that there is some Appearance of Arguments, and perhaps Truth too, in this Objection.

But further, says He, the Writer of that Paper (meaning Himself) not only lays down the general Proposition of such Debates, tending to make an Enemy stiff and pro duce Delays, but backs the general Doctrine with signifying distinctly the Instances, in which the Craftsman's Writings must have had that Effect, Step by Step, through the whole Series of our past Transactions. But as the Craftsman disguises the general Accusation, so He omits and overlooks the distinct, particular Illustration of it, without a Word of Answer. — I hope, I shall satisfy

Him at last, by stating his Argument in its full Length and in his own Words. He may believe me, when I assure Him that my only Reason for reducing it before a general, short Proposition, was to avoid Prolixity, which ought always to be avoided, in such a Paper, as much as possible) and not with any Design of concealing the Force of his Argument, or from any Apprehensions of falling under the Weight of it. For the same Reason I pass'd over what He calls his particular Illustration of the general Proposition. I apprehended that if I could evince the Usefulness and Legality of such Writings in general, notwithstanding the Inconveniences, which may sometimes attend them, it would be of little Importance to the Argument to examine distinctly the particular Instances, in which He endeavours to prove that our Writings have had a bad Influence on the late publick Transactions. We might likewise stand fairly excused from entering into such an Examination in the Eyes of every candid Man, who considers the Danger of taking such a Liberty, at present, and the Difficulties, in which we are already involved on that Account; but since He presumes it upon me, and seems to triumph in an imaginary Victory, I will consider this particular Illustration, as far as I judge is consistent with Prudence and Self-preservation — He begins thus.

Let Him, for Example, shew that his continued maltreating and ridiculing the Ministers here at home did not tend to take off their Weight and Figure abroad, and consequently impede their Negotiations.—I am ready to acknowledge that the general Odium, Contempt, or Ridicule, under which a Minister labours at home, does certainly take off from his Weight and Figure abroad, as Experience sufficiently instructs us; but this Argument tends, like all his others, to impugn the Liberty of writing on any Matters of Government, domesick as well as foreign; for a Minister may render Himself as odious or contemptible, by his wicked Administration at home, as by his silly Conduct of Affairs abroad; and therefore the Discovery of either, according to this Argument, is equally mischievous, and ought to be equally prevented.

I must here put the Reader in Mind that what I foretold, in my first Paper on this Subject, is actually come to pass; viz: that if this Kind of Reasoning should be suffered to pass upon the World, We might expect to see other Bill Actions and Sub distinctions trump up, concerning the Examination of domesick Affairs, upon the same Principle of Reasoning. This, I say, is already come to pass; for my Adversary hath now broached another Distinction, or Sub-distribution, between debating Point's of domesick Policy and discovering, or asserting domesick Facts; the latter of which He thinks as mischievous as examining Matters of external Policy; so that We shall soon see what Degree of Liberty He hath left us — What He says of my Conduct, in this Particular, is nothing to the Purpose; for if his Argument is really agreeable to the Principles of our Constitution, I must allow my self as criminal in one Case, as in the other.

This Method of Reasoning hath furnished me with another Observation on the same Subject; which is, that Matters of external and internal Policy are so interwoven and blended together in most Governments, particularly in our own, that it is impossible, in many Cases, to divide them; for as the ill Conduct of foreign Affairs generally affects our domesick Concerns in a very sensible Manner; so the bad Administration of Affairs at home hath commonly the same mischievous Influence on our Negotiations abroad; but I can by no means admit the Consequence drawn by this Writer, that all Examination of this Subject ought for that Reason to be prohibited and suppressed, because I apprehend that such a Restraint would render our Condition much worse, instead of better, by encouraging bad Ministers to pursue those Dishes, which Ambition, Avarice, or any other wicked Motive may dictate to them, without any Regard to the Interest of their Country, or any Dread of publick Examination.

I now come to the particular Instances of Mischie夫, which are said to be the Effects of my Writings; and here again I am obliged to quote the Gentleman's own Words, lest He should accuse me of Unfairness, or Misrepresentation; but I hope He will excuse me, if I do not swell my Paper with all his Tautologies and Repetitions.—The five great Heads of Charge against me are contained in the following Sentence.

Let him first (lays this Author, speaking of me) that the Progress of such Writings did not help to embolden the Spanish Court to insist on the Stipulations in Favour of Don Carlos; nor afterwards spirit the German to demand our Assent to the Pragmatic Sanction; that it hath not since then occasioned the manifest Fears the Spaniards were under of our sincerely intending to execute that Treaty, and thereby put them on beginning and continuing the Works before Gibraltar, as a Spur to our so doing; and lastly, that it hath not given Life to the French Machinations, in Opposition to the actual Execution of that Treaty; or that it may not, if continued tend to draw yet more and greater Inconveniences on us, if any of these are to be considered as such.

I am sorry to hear that a certain Gentleman stands in need of any Apology on all, or any of these Accounts, and much more so, that I should be made the Scope-Goat on

such an Occasion. I was in full Expectation of seeing the Introduction of Don Carlos and the Guaranty of the pragmatick Sanction applauded as Measures highly just, prudent, glorious and advantageous to Great Britain; and as for the new Works before Gibraltar and the late Machinations of the French Court, I little thought, or apprehended, that They would be laid to my Charge, having constantly oppos'd the one, as far as a Writer could oppose them, and never given the most distant Encouragement to the other. It is cruel therefore to lay such a Burthen upon Me — Alas! my Shoulders are not half broad enough to support it!

I must confess, indeed, that it is impossible for me to purge my self intirely from this Accusation; because it is impossible to prove what are really the private Motives, which actuate the Conduct of Princes and States; but I think it highly absurd and ridiculous to suppose Them influenced, in so particular a Manner, by a Set of Writers and Pamphleteers; or even by a Faction, which hath been often called inconsiderable both at home and abroad. They have not, at least, been ever yet able to defeat the Views, or Demands of the M——r, in the most essential Point of Government; and till That is once done, I apprehend that foreign Princes lay but little Stress upon any Opposition to their Measures.

But let us examine this Charge a little farther.—The Succession of Don Carlos was stipulated, long before this Paper was set up, by the Quadruple Alliance, as the Writers on the other Side have frequently urged, in Favour of their Patron, and since That by the Treaties of Seville and Vienna, which are very unaccountably imputed to Those, who disapproved them, as far as Reason and the Law would permit Them to do. It is equally unjust to lay the new Works before Gibraltar to the Charge of the same Gentlemen, who have always complained that the Defect of the Treaty of Utrecht was not supply'd by subsequent Treaties, and even pointed it out, before some of Them were made. The Guaranty of the pragmatick Sanction will admit of the same Remark; for We concur'd with the Author of the Enquiry in our Apprehensions that it may one Day prove disadvantageous to the Interest of Europe, and perhaps involve Great Britain in a War. As for the late Machinations of the French Court, We apprehend that They were occasioned by the late Treaty of Vienna, which was negotiated and concluded without *** * * *

I shall make but one Observation more on this Head; which is, that if the Succession of Don Carlos and the Guaranty of the pragmatick Sanction are really bad Measures in Themselves, (as this Writer presumes to insinuate,) I think the Attempt, with which We are charg'd, to defeat Them by forefalling and anticipating the Articles of those Treaties, in which They were stipulated, was rather a meritorious than a criminal attempt.

But whatever Effects our Writings may have produced, or whatever Encouragement they have given to our Enemies, the same Question will still recur; whether all the great Advantages of the Liberty of the Press ought to be given up, in order to prevent a few small Inconveniences, which naturally attend all Liberty, as well as This; or, in other Words, whether such Writings do not produce more good Effects than bad ones; and whether a Minister ought to be suffered to go on in his Measures, without any popular Check or Control, lest the Examination of his Conduct should happen to give our Enemies some Advantage.

There is one more Argument of this Writer, which deserves our particular Notice. He says that such a Method of examining Negotiations and Treaties tends to prevent the Accession of other States; to which He adds this wise Observation, that the worse any Treaty is, the more We stand in Need of strengthening it by such Accessions, and consequently all Writings, which tend to expose it, are the more mischievous and prejudicial to the Nation.

This is an excellent Argument, in Behalf of blundering, or corrupt Ministers; for, it seems, the more weak, or wicked they are, the more is our Duty to confide and acquiesce in their Conduct. Their very Folly and Ignorance ought to sanctify their Administration, and exempt it from Censure.

But if the Foundation of this Argument is solid and substantial, how shall We defend the Conduct of the Whig Patriots and the Whig Writers in the Reigns of King Charles and King James the Second? How shall We defend the Reversal of those Sentences, which had been pass'd upon Mr. Johnson and others, after the Revolution? How shall We defend the Writings and Conduct of the Whigs at the latter End of Queen Anne's Reign, in order to expose and defeat the Negotiations of a general Peace, which were then carrying on by the Authority of the Crown? — If the present M——r hath Reason to complain of Difficulties and Distresses, from the Opposition, which He hath met with, how much more Reason of Complaint had the Ministers of these Times; when the Nation was more violently divided into Parties; when the Malecontents in the House of Lords (who were even join'd by many of the Bishops) were able to carry Points against the Court; when the monied Companies in the

City gave their Assistance to the same Cause; when some of the greatest Powers in Europe added their Weight to the Opposition, and even the Successor to the Throne encouraged it by a solemn Memorial, delivered in his Name? — I mention these Points, without any Regard to Parties, and without any Design of either approving, or condemning all the Transactions of these Times, but only as Masters of Fact, which may serve to illustrate the present Argument. It will be to no Purpose to say that the Ministers of these Times were opposed in bad Measures and the present M——r is oppo'd in good ones; for That is only begging the Question, as to the Argument, and all Ministers, whether good or bad, will have the same Plea and assert the same Right.

But I hope I have said enough upon this Subject, and shall now cast up the Account of Liberty, as it stands before us, when the Substractions of this Writer are deducted.—In the first Place, we must not write upon Negotiations, Treaties, or foreign Affairs at all; especially in critical Junctures, and delicate Situations, when such Writings are most useful and necessary; because they may happen to give our Enemies an Advantage over us. Neither must We enter, with any Freedom, into the Examination of domesick Affairs, because it tends to discover Facts, which may be productive of the same Evils. For this Reason, though Cato hath been lately justified and applauded, by these very Writers, for his inflaming Harangues against the S. S. Directors, We must not be allow'd, according to this Argument, to expose the Mismanagements of the charitable Corporation, or any other Companies of the same Nature. In short, the only Liberty, which He hath left us, is either to extol the current Measures of the Times, or to write general Discourses upon Government, which have no Relation to them.

I will defy this worthy Gentleman to go above one Step farther; and That is, either by proposing the Restoration of the Star-Chamber, or the Revival of the Licensing-Act. If the latter Scheme should prevail in his good Opinion, I will take the Liberty to offer one Amendment. As I cannot learn that John Streeter, of ever-famous and loyal Memory, hath left any Representatives behind Him, in the Printing Business, I would humbly propose that the same Exemption may be granted to S. Buckley, J. Roberts and J. Peele; whose eminent Services to the Publick have as fully intituled Them to such an extraordinary Distinction.

I will conclude with reminding our Readers of the great Difficulties and Restraints, under which we are obliged to write. Our Adversaries, having all the Advantages of Power on their Side, are privileg'd to expatriate in what Latitude They please, and without any Regard to the ordinary Rules of Justice and Equity, as this Writer hath lately done, in endeavouring to exasperate our Fellow-Countrymen against us; whilst We have all the Argus-Eyes of the Law upon us, and for that Reason are often obliged to remain silent, when We are fully able to defend ourselves.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

Our last Advices from the Hague mention a Report there, that another Alliance between England, France and Spain is now on the Carpet; by which the Peace and Balance of Europe will be better established than it hath ever yet been.—What do these Dutch Writers mean? Can the Peace and Balance of Europe be better established than They are already by the glorious Execution of the Treaties of Seville and Vienna?

LONDON, November 27.

On Friday next, in the Morning, will come on at the King's Bench, Westminster, the TRIAL of Mr. FRANCLIN, for printing the Hague Letter in the Craftsman of Jan. 2d last.

Extract of a Letter from Jamaica, Sept. 14. The Shoreham Man of War, in her Passage between Barbadoes and this Place, met with a violent Hurricane, wherein she lost all her Masts. Barbadoes is almost ruined thereby, and Hispaniola suffered extremely. We had a Blast of its Tail, which is attended with such dry Weather, that the Sugar Canes and Provisions are almost all destroy'd. We have missed both of the May and August Rains, and have not had a Season to plant a Grain of Corn or Provision; so God knows what will become of us! The Officers and Soldiers are one half dead, and the others are so sickly as to be of no possible Service. I never saw People drop off so fast in my Life.

Tuesday Night came on before the Lord Raymond, at the King's Beach Bar, Westminster, a Trial between an Attorney of the County of Essex Plaintiff, and a Justice of the Peace of the same County Defendant, for Slander and Defamation; but it appearing to the Court, that the Attorney endeavoured to persuade several of his Clients to withdraw their Business from him, in order to enhance Damages, the Jury gave a Verdict for the Defendant, with five Pounds Damage.

A Writ of Error is taken out by the Lord Bishop of Ely, for carrying the Cause between him and the Rev. Dr. Bentley, by Appeal, into the House of Lords.

Last Tuesday at a Board of Admiralty several superannuated Seamen were minuted for the Pension of Greenwich Hospital, and were sent thither by the Lordships Order accordingly.

* See the Answer to the Answer to the Conversation between two Englishmen, &c. lately printed in the Courant.